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Senate Republicans pledge groundwater protection plan will move this fall

LANSING – Legislation to protect Michigan’s groundwater will be before the Senate by the end of October, Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, announced today.

“Michigan’s water is the state’s most important natural resource and a major economic asset,” said Birkholz, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee. “We must be proactive in managing its uses to ensure it remains abundant and available for future generations.”

During a press conference today, Birkholz outlined legislative actions designed to conserve and protect Michigan’s water that will be taken up by her committee in October.

These Senate Republican actions include:

- Establishing a way to assess impacts of new high-capacity water use on surface water, natural resources and nearby existing wells.
- Implementing a groundwater protection system based on groundwater inventory maps.
- Setting up a groundwater use certification system that includes permits for high-capacity users.
- Creating a water use reporting system.
- Continuing the Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council to provide ongoing recommendations.

These legislative goals are a culmination of two and a half years of studying Michigan’s groundwater and gathering public input from the Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council, farmers, local elected officials, manufacturers and private citizens.

(More)

Key findings from the public input include:

- The state's groundwater is abundant in some places but does not recharge as quickly in others.
- There is sound scientific evidence that certain groundwater dependent water bodies must be protected in order to ensure sustainability of key sensitive natural features.
- Generally, farmers, manufacturers, utilities, municipalities and other major water users have used water wisely.
- Unnecessary water regulations can and will hurt jobs, personal livelihoods and communities throughout Michigan.

The hearings and mapping were a result of recommendations from the Great Lakes Conservation Task Force to take a step-by-step approach to protecting Michigan's water.

"Through my work as chairman of the Great Lakes Conservation Task Force and Senator Birkholz's recent work it is clear we need effective groundwater legislation," said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. "I strongly support Senator Birkholz's efforts to protect and conserve one of Michigan's greatest resources."

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